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Australia and Galicia in Transnational Narrativesⁱ

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Abstract: This article analyzes the transnational features of narratives between Galicia and Australia from the year 1519 to the Present-day. Sailors like Pedro Fernandez de Quiros and Luis Váez de Torres, who reached Australia in the sixteenth century, will be considered as the starting point of a cultural dialogue still going on in today's literature not only as regards the geography of the continent but also in the collective imagination of the country. Other connections between these countries are also established by contemporary novelists such as Peter Carey, Sally Morgan and Murray Bail, who use Galician history and places, filtered through British sources, to address Australia and its present-day characters and decolonizing conflicts. Finally, the works of other authors such as Robert Graves and Félix Calvino, who also deal with this literary dialogue in their fiction, are explored.

Keywords: Australia; Galicia; Robert Graves; James McAuley; Félix Calvino; transnational fiction; diasporas.

Migrations occurred in recent centuries have led to intricate interactions and exchanges between cultures and nations, often involving peoples and countries far removed from one other. Ever since the Renaissance people, cultures and ideas have been in ever-increasing circulation due to migration, exile or other forms of displacement, which has duly resulted in constant and multi-faceted cultural transfers. These have correspondingly involved negotiations, alterations and reinventions of national traditions and literary forms which have had deep theoretical and methodological implications for cultural and literary studies. Among these is the turn to a transnational approach to literature, both in the era of the nation-state and in that of globalization, in which decolonization praxis is attempted in order to contest discursive representations of former colonies as marginal and to engage analysis instead from an epistemological position in which

they are the centre (Connell 2007). Although the term transnational was first used in the early twentieth-century by Randolph Bourne (1916) in relation to the history and migration of Jews, it is now used to refer to other world-wide diasporas and to their reflections in culture and literature. Modern approaches to transnational literatures include a post-colonial perspective on global relations, a respect for Aboriginal native peoples or first nations of the world, and an inclusive perspective on imperialism, as described by Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). For Pratt, the existence of a “contact zone” is understood as a requirement for transnational literatures (pp. 76-77); Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands* develops the same idea, noting that “Identities, cultures and nations are produced, fractured and continually reproduced within spaces or locations” (p. 76). This approach has recently been explored further by Paul Jay in *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* (2010), and by Sten Pultz Moslund in *Migration Literature and Hybridity: The Different Speeds of Transcultural Change* (2010). Both authors look at issues relating to the ongoing debate on how Anglophone literature is being written by transnational and multicultural writers who deal with the interstices of colonialism, decolonization and migration. At various points Australian studies have been charged with speaking from a position of Eurocentrism, considering this country subsidiary. Contemporary approaches on subaltern studies view Australia as an arena on which the colonial encounter takes place and where the so-called *Southern Theory* developed by Raewyn Connell should be applied (2007). For this author “Southern theory [...] calls attention to periphery-centre relations in the realm of knowledge [...] and uses “the term subaltern not so much to name a social category as to highlight relations of power” (viii-ix).

The relations between Spain, particularly Galicia, and Australia began, as we know, with the arrival of navigators in the era of European voyages to lands “unknown”. In the year 1519 Galician sailors arrived on board the ships of Ferdinand Magellan and Juan Sebastian Elcano. Then between 1525 and 1527 the caravel *San Lesmes* and other vessels left the port of Coruña in a flotilla led by Francisco José García Jofre de Loaysa, who was the first navigator to reach Cape Horn from Europe. Ships from Galicia had arrived on Australian soil by the 16th century and there is evidence of trade between Corunna and the Maluku Isles and adjacent territories, with the city having received in 1522 the exclusive concession by King Charles V of Habsburg of a trading house specializing in spices called the Casa do Maluco [Maluku House] (Migués, 2008: p. 85). In 1606 the expeditions of Pedro Fernandez de Quiros (1565-1614) and Luis Váez de Torres (1565-1613?) made their arrival, which would be key in the European discovery of what we now know as Australia (Fernández de Quirós, 2000, III: p. 23; Pittarello, 1990; Hervé, 1983). It should be noted that the identities of these sailors can be understood to be European and transnational, as Quiros, for one, was a Portuguese in the service of King Philip II, not only King of Castile, Aragon, Milan, etc., but also King of Portugal between 1580 and 1598, to be succeeded by his son Philip III. The stories of Quiros’ travels were published in English and French in 1617 and likely served as the basis for subsequent expeditions from other countries, particularly from what is now the United Kingdom.

The 17th and 18th centuries also saw voyages to Oceania (Prieto, 1984), among which we might note the voyage of Isabel Barreto de Castro (1567? -1612), the wife of Alvaro de Mendaña de Neira, originally from Santa Maria de Bendaña in Touro (Corunna) (Fernandez de Quiros, p. 107), the sailor from Pontevedra (Galicia), on the first European voyage to the Solomon Islands and the Marquesas Islands (Bosch 1943; Elias de Zevallos, 1995). Indeed, the old Bendaña residence in Toural Square in the city of Santiago de Compostela is currently open to the public as a museum. Isabel Barreto was the first woman to command a ship, following the death of her husband, and arrived in Manila with Quiros (Majo, 1946, Márquez, 2006). A novel about this has recently been published by Francisco Núñez Roldán, *Jaque al peón* (2014) [Putting a Pawn in Check], which won the City of Badajoz Novel Prize, and which deals with the union of Spain and Portugal, with narrative material based on the correspondence between Philip II from El Escorial and Lisbon's Rúa do Comercio (Commerce Street), the base for the diplomat Cristobal de Moura, the architect of the union (Alonso Giráldez, 2014, n.p.). In this text we can see in detail that identities were fluid in such a transnational context (Gil, 1989).

As this brief historical sketch shows, 500 years ago Europe already had relations with the land which from a Eurocentric viewpoint was known as *Terra Incognita* (Fernández-Shaw, 2000: 83-89). However, the presence of Galician sailors on Australian shores is barely known, having occurred 200 years prior to the arrival of British with Captain Cook in 1770 and the subsequent first British settlement near Botany Bay in Sydney in January 1788. As the Australian historian Kenneth Gordon McIntyre indicates in the very title of his book *The Secret Discovery of Australia: Portuguese Ventures 200 Years before Captain Cook*, the voyages prior to the arrival of the British were forgotten and it is only recently that the stories of those voyages are being recovered and have begun to appear in historical works (Day 2009, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii).

One of the most distinguished Galician travellers to the continent of Australia is the Benedictine monk Rosendo Salvado, who arrived in Perth in 1846. Salvado's presence in Australia is still remembered due to the community that he founded and because of his recognition of Aboriginal cultural and artistic values, as his work in this area continues to be acknowledged and analysed today (Shell 2015, Haebich 2015). When Salvado came to Australia, settlers treated the Indigenous peoples in a way that reminded of slavery. Against that context of oppression, Salvado's vision was to base life in his community on the principles of racial and cultural coexistence, creating a kind of Garden of Eden on Earth, one in which the Aborigines could educate their counterparts (Stormont, 1998). We could say that this nineteenth-century world is similar to the portrayal by Nobel Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa of the painter Paul Gauguin in Tahiti in his novel *El paraíso en la otra esquina* (2003) (*The Way to Paradise* (2004)), in that the ideal of Salvado was creating a paradise on Earth or, at least, the improvement of living conditions for the Aboriginal peoples.

Though relationships between travellers from Galicia and the southern continent suffered many ups and downs, they remain to this day, and Galicia is present in Australia through the teaching of the language and literature in different communities, and also at universities such as Queensland, La Trobe, Sydney and

Melbourne, where there are also centres for Galician studies. However, the presence of Galicians in Australia remains alive in the collective imagination not only through the memory of sailors, by place names, such as the Torres Strait between Australia and Papua New Guinea, and by the work of Salvado—even though thriving in the Benedictine community of New Norcia—, but also due to the importance of Galician elements in Australian literature. Much of contemporary literary production in Australia focuses on the exploration of a new reality by European characters who arrive from across the oceans. This happens in the work of Peter Carey and other authors, and thus Galicia and Galicians remain in the collective imagination and become a part of the literary and creative fabric of the continent, as with Australian authors Murray Bail and Sally Morgan, and even the British writer Robert Graves. Authors of Galician origin also use Australian themes in their works, published in Galician and in English, which are read both in Australia and the United States.

One notable case is that of the navigator Pedro Fernandes de Queirós, in the Portuguese spelling, Fernández de Quirós in Spanish spelling and Quiros in English, who referred to the continent as "La Austrialia del Espiritu Santo" to honor the reigning House of Habsburg in Spain, note the 'i' in Spanish, since the Habsburg family name was "Austria" (Clark, I, 1962: p. 15). In the failed voyages of Quiros he believed and claimed to have reached what he called the "Great South Land" and this gained him a place in the imagination of the inhabitants of the lands of which he dreamed, that is, in the minds of contemporary Australian artists, for some of whom he became an eternal character. His narratives have been studied both from historical and cultural perspectives (Kelly 1960, pp. 183-193), and was memorably recognized by James McAuley (1917-1976) in his 1964 epic poem *Captain Quiros*. This now classic piece pays homage to the sailor and his frustrated dreams of becoming an Australian hero—or perhaps an antihero, as he failed to realize his dream of making a third voyage and actually setting foot on the island-continent. Years later, in 1980, one of Australia's best-known composers, Peter Sculthorpe (1929), fascinated by the epic figure of Quiros, as seen through the work of the poet James McCauley, premiered *The Visions of Captain Quiros: for guitar and orchestra*. The symbol Pedro Fernandez de Quiros represents continued to grow in the collective imagination of the Australian people as suggested by the fact that in 1982, to celebrate its 50th anniversary, the ABC communications company produced the televised opera *Quiros*, with a libretto by Brian Bell and Peter Sculthorpe himself. In this production the navigator is represented as an idealistic visionary who goes in search of his dream, stubbornly so in view of the many failures and obstacles encountered on the way. In the words of historian K.G. McIntyre, this is the first patriot and prophet of Australia (1977, p. 25). This idealistic vision of what was for him a continent to be discovered can be found at various moments in the libretto in the voice of Quiros himself:

*I believe in the force that drives us
past horizons of the mind... I
believe that I could find in these
dark seas the Great South Land.*

East of India,

*West of the Solomons,
South of Java,
A continent.*

*A vast land from tropic to the pole,
A past and future to unfold,
A last grand enigma to be solved,
This continent.*

Moreover when the character of Quiros perceives the failure of his unsuccessful trips, he analyses the possible perverse effects that colonization would cause, contrasting this with his idealistic vision of the voyages made by Europeans to Australia:

*If we had reached the Great South
Land,
With all our superstitions,
Our arrogance, our ignorance,
Our covetous ambitions,
We should have spread our
decadence,
Our fever and destruction,
And stamped upon that bright new
world,
The old world's dark corruption.*

Thus, the opera not only reflects on Quiros' voyages and his achievements or failures, but also has him voice the kind of considerations that would arise from a contemporary postcolonial perspective and that attest to a re-envisioning of Australian history that incorporates images which are more inclusive and integrative of the Indigenous peoples. Since Peter Sculthorpe is known to take inspiration from Australian painters in his compositions, especially the work of Russell Drysdale (1812-1981), it is not unlikely that these visions of the Australian visual artists perhaps also resonate in the musical composition commemorating Quiros and were surely present in the visual and aesthetic design of the opera for television.

Sculthorpe's work about Quiros was premiered on October 27th 2007 in the concert hall of the Sydney Opera House, hosted by the Spanish Ambassador in Australia, and it has since been performed several times in the country, such as in 2013 when it featured in the concert program of the capital, Canberra. Additionally, the composer would later return to the themes and music of Quiros, using them as the basis for the oratorio *The Great South Land*, broadcast on ABC Classic FM on Saturday May 11th 2013. This adaptation of the opera into an oratorio allowed for its performance in concert halls, without the need for a large theatre, so that the work could reach a greater variety of audiences in different parts of the country. According to Stephen Adams (2013), the evolution of the character of Quiros through Australian literature, music and opera from the 1960s to the present day reflects the different positions of the country and the intelligentsia regarding the

conception of their own identity as a nation and their own evolution away from Eurocentrism, thus recognizing their specific reality from positions that encompass their own complexities and historical contradictions (n.p.).

A contemporary of Quiros, Galician explorer and navigator Isabel Barreto, appears as a fictional character in both Hispanic and Anglophone cultures. In contemporary Hispanic letters we first see the entry of Isabel Barreto as a fictional heroine from the pen of Galician journalist Pemón Bouzas in *El informe Manila: Isabel Barreto, la que surcó los Mares del Sur en busca de las rutas de las especias* (2005) [Isabel Barreto, the Lady who Sailed the South Seas in Search of the Species Route]. However, some fifty years prior to this British literary critic, poet and novelist Robert Graves (1895-1985) also made a fictional treatment of the voyages of Isabel Barreto in *The Islands of Unwisdom* (1949), translated into Spanish in 1984. This novel includes a particularly revealing depiction of Galician women, described by one of the male members of the expedition as “astonishingly” hard-working, in a portrayal of European female identities which was discursively constructed in colonialist Manichean oppositions North versus South and extrapolated to wider contexts:

[...] Your Galician women of every rank and station show remarkable independence and fortitude: while passing though the province on a journey to Corunna I was astonished to see them guiding the plough, sowing, harrowing, felling trees, in short, doing all the work of men, yet keeping their modesty and piety in a way that would shame many women of the South. (p. 354)

However, Ysabel (the old Spanish spelling, used in this novel) does not embody all the virtues which the rest of Galician women apparently possess: “The gold-fly seems to have bitten Doña Ysabel too, and her greed matches her courage” (p. 365). Graves depicts the Spaniards as having a high opinion of themselves:

As we sat at dessert, with doublets unfastened, in a happy mood, we were preached a second sermon, this time by the General. It concerned our dealings with the natives, to whom we came not as conquerors, but as ambassadors of Christ; not as takers, but as givers. (p. 405)

The identity of the voyagers here is presented as transnational, in that they speak in different languages on board the ship, including Castilian, Galician and Portuguese (p. 448). Galician traditions such as witchcraft are also incorporated as key elements in the text, with ladies from Corunna said to use black magic:

‘The witches of Corunna
They come in black and white,
But Saint James with his sword-hilt
Put them all to fight;
For the Devil, their master,
Who on that cross did gaze
Broke foul wind at either end
And swooned for amaze.’ (p. 487)

Moreover, the general population in this area is said to be familiar with such practices: “[...] Not for nothing does he come from Corunna, where every child is raised in terror of witchcraft, and the very priests are alleged to be in league with Satan.” (p. 547), and it is a place where one can suffer their invectives, since “[...] the witches of Corunna don’t use their spells merely in self-defence” (p. 547). Ysabel Barreto is familiar with witchcraft although she does not use it herself, but rather plays with it to scare the crew and thus to make use of its power (p. 547). The Navy officers Pedro Fernández de Quiros, chief pilot of the *San Geronimo*, and Álvaro de Mendaña, leader of the expedition, are the characters most fully described in the novel. Through their voyage the author also analyses the causes of the failures of the future conquest of the Pacific Ocean by the Spaniards, as well as the significant loss of power in the world by the Spanish crown.

Part of the history of Australian literature revolves around the arrival of people to the land and their experiences of exploring their new environs. These explorations are not necessarily just geographical but also psychological, and thus we find *Bildungsroman* in which the characters recall their experiences on arrival in the country. One of the novelists who has dealt in detail with this issue is Peter Carey, who addresses the arrival of people from different countries of the United Kingdom to Australia. In his *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000) he recalls the harsh experiences of an Irish family who struggle to escape poverty by coming to settle in Australia in the 19th century after the father of the family had been transported to Tasmania for crimes allegedly committed in the United Kingdom. The family’s way of settling in the new continent involves a challenge to a tough and unfair system of power, in that they become bandits and misfits. Also in this period we find the voyage of young English men and women who sought a new life on their arrival in Sydney. Such is the case in *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988), a novel which describes a not too distant past and which owes a debt to magical realism. Dangerous expeditions through the Australian bush, colonizing supposedly virgin and unknown territory to the foreign Europeans, come to life in Carey’s novel and also in the subsequent film version by Gillian Armstrong (1997). As in the novels of Garcia Marquez or Salman Rushdie, *Oscar and Lucinda* appears to be based on the many chance possibilities that life has to offer, as well as on the many limitations imposed by fate. Carey uses a historical narrative from a current perspective, adding a postmodern and postcolonial viewpoint (Woodcock, 2003: p. 73) and also allowing us to learn from past mistakes, both personal and collective (Lorenzo Modia and Alonso Giráldez, 2008: p. 327). The filmic nature of Carey’s novel was evident from the moment of its publication, and the film itself did not take long to appear in cinemas (Craven, 1998: pp. 25-26; Carter, 2006: n.p.). In the same way, many studies noted the similarities between Carey’s work and the Spanish conquista films of Werner Herzog *Aguirre, The Wrath of God* (1972) and *Fitzcarraldo* (1982) (Woodcock, 1996: 84). With reference to the film version of the novel, Armstrong recognises: “It was my little *Fitzcarraldo*” (Carter, 2006). Herzog’s story deals with the extravagant figure of Brian Sweeney Fitzgerald, who was determined to make money from the construction of an opera house in what he refers to as a border town in the Peruvian jungle. The grandeur of the project is equal only to its apparent madness. Fitzcarraldo attempts to avoid the river rapids by transporting the Peruvian steamship over land, from river to river. Similarly,

Oscar tries to build his glass cathedral on the Australian continent, seeking thus the rare balance between reason and madness. In this sense it seems to bare a connection with the adventures of the Galician Rosendo Salvado, who in the nineteenth century also carried his piano and the materials to build a monastery through the Australian bush, his purpose—as mentioned earlier—being to raise funds for the Aborigines and thus to provide what he envisioned as a better spiritual and material life for them (Stormont, 1998).

Also worthy of mention here are two novels by contemporary Australian authors in which Galician place names play a notable part. These are *Eucalyptus* (1998) by Murray Bail, and *My Place* (1987) by Sally Morgan. In the former, the name Corunna (the anglicised form of the city of A Coruña) evokes a distant place with legends and mysteries. The novel relates the story of an Australian girl who falls in love with a dark foreigner, both of them finding themselves faced with the miraculous and mysterious reflection of Corunna's lighthouse:

There's a place called Corunna in north-west Spain, he had said. A place of rocks – geological delirium. Corunna is known for just two things: foul weather, it never stops raining, and its lighthouse built of granite in the Dark Ages. Local families call it 'the Tower of Caramel'. (p. 208)

The account of Corunna contains a mirror structure, in that in Australia a story is created that reflects what happens in the Galician city, where the girl imagines coming in search of her lover, with whom she has lost contact (Cabarcos, 2008: p. 265). What is produced, then, is a reflected relationship between what happens to the heroine of the novel in Australia and what happens to the imaginary one, whom she thinks about, and who himself comes from Corunna. In *My Place* Australia is the centre and Corunna is the mirror image. These parallels are seen to be illuminated by the physical mirrors which were historically used in the Tower of Hercules, the lighthouse of Corunna, to amplify its light, and which seem to be a caramel colour due to the shade of the granite facade of the tower. Ellen is also seen to be doubly trapped in a tower waiting for her beloved: firstly, because in her father's plantation she meant to become a fairy princess, and secondly, because in her home there is a real tower. In mirror images there is always a true image and an inverse one, and on this occasion the woman from Corunna is the one who cannot find her lover, so that it is in the inverse image that Ellen can be happy with him.

In the case of Sally Morgan's *My Place*, the place name Corunna appears in "Return to Corunna" and as a family name in three other sections with different titles, "Arthur Corunna's Story," "Gladys Corunna's Story" and "Daisy Corunna's Story." These names come from the Australian place name Corunna Downs, located in Western Australia, given that an ancestor of one of the characters in the work comes from a ranch there: "Corunna Downs was named by my husband. There is a poem, "Corunna". He was reading a book at the time with the natives, and in it was a poem about Corunna, I think it was in Spain, so he named the station after that" (Morgan, 2003: p. 168). The best known poem about the city in the English canon, and almost certainly the one to which she is referring to, is the one by Irish writer Charles Wolfe, written about the Battle of Elviña, known in English as the Battle of Corunna, in January 1809 (Cabarcos, 2008: p. 269). It deals with the struggle in

Spain between French and English forces for pre-eminence in Europe, and hence in the world, a struggle called the Peninsular War in England and known in Spain as the War of Independence. The English were considered inferior in strength and decided to avoid a confrontation with Napoleon's troops and to retreat by sea via the port of A Coruña. The strategy was successful, but the commanding British general, the Scot Sir John Moore, died during fighting in the hills at the entrance of the city, today the site of the University of Coruña's Elviña campus. The poem "On the Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna" first published by Wolfe in *The Newry Telegraph* in 1817, and later, anonymously, in the Scottish *Blackwood's Magazine*, came to attract the attention of such illustrious readers as Lord Byron, Edgar Allan Poe and George Orwell, and was widely anthologised, finally becoming the most widespread patriotic elegy in the British Empire, and was for many years part of the compulsory education of English schoolchildren. Even the preeminent Galician writer Rosalia de Castro sought to participate in this literary dialogue, publishing the poem "The tomb of General Sir John Moore" in her book *Follas Novas* [*New Leaves*] (1880).

Yet the power struggle that arose in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century through this Galician city is represented in the Australian narrative with a different meaning, in that the colonial power takes possession of new territories, including the Aboriginal peoples, who come to serve the British and even to be their property and are given names by their owners in a negation of their Aboriginal identity, origin and culture. As Nan noted in reference to 19th century Aboriginal ranches, "in those days, we was owned, like a cow or a horse" (Morgan, 2003: p. 337, cit. in Cabarcos, 2008: p. 274); their identity, then, was like that of working animals, not human beings. Thus the name Corunna, a city associated with the liberation from the Napoleonic yoke in Spain and thus as the first step in the final defeat of the latter, takes on in Sally Morgan's novel various meanings, depending on whether it is spoken by owners or Aborigines. In the case of women this submission is twofold, since they also suffer sexual exploitation by the ranch owners. In fact, it is out of a rancher's sexual relationship with Annie that Nan is born, so becoming a personal property of the rancher —indeed the same ranch master goes on to have an incestuous relationship with her which will yield new workers for the plantation (Cabarcos, 2008: p. 274). Over time, the old estate, called "La Coruña", becomes an air base for the Australian forces during World War II and acquires a new meaning, that of a place of liberation from the yoke of the Axis forces, and later on it even receives recognition for its part in the agricultural development of the Australian northwest.

As seen so far the relationship between Galicia and Australia endures in place names, taken there either by Galicians or by travellers who symbolically maintained the iconography of these. The complexity of the meanings are multiplied in Australia, and can be seen as dependant on the specific period analyzed and the perspective taken. However, there are also other elements of Galician culture that persist today in Australian literature and culture. These are mainly related to the underprivileged Galicians who migrated to the country in the large exoduses of the 1950s and '60s, sometimes via previous points of emigration, such as Brazil, France and England, among others. Galicians and Spaniards arrived in steamers chartered by the Australian Government in programs known as "Kangaroo", "Eucalyptus",

“Emu” and “Kerry.” About 500 unmarried women also arrived on a program called “Martha”, recruited in collaboration with the Spanish Church to accompany the more than 7,000 men who had emigrated from Spain to Australia (Boland, 2008: p. 16). Many found in Australia the better future that they sought, especially for their children, the second generation, though not of course in all cases.

Contemporary writer Félix Calvino was born in Galicia (Spain), but emigrated definitively to Australia and currently publishes novels and short stories in English which are anchored in his Galician infancy. He is thus a current link between Australian fiction and Galicia, where he was born in 1944. He emigrated in the late 1960s after a rural education under Franco’s dictatorship. His refusal to undergo compulsory military service led to his abandoning the country for good. Having lived in the United Kingdom, he settled in Australia, where he graduated in Spanish and English at the University of Melbourne, and is about to earn a doctorate in Creative Writing at the University of Queensland. Calviño, or Calvino as he is known in the English-speaking world, started his literary career late in Australia, publishing short stories and a novella. Galicia, an autonomous territory in North-Western Spain, has long known emigration to Europe, America or indeed to other parts of Spain, for economic as well as political reasons. Its marginal economic and political situation within both the Spanish and the European context produced a widespread migration. The Galician diaspora is scattered throughout the world and its literary and cultural rebirth has been nourished by expatriate writers, particularly in Cuba and Argentina, from the early twentieth century onwards. Its literature can be described as transnational in that, from the thematic point of view, it resides in one country and is published in the language of another, and develops the theme of memory and nostalgia for a past which is distant in both time and space.

This transnational approach is useful for the study of Calvino’s work, in that the role of memory and nostalgia are key issues in his texts, which reflect the memories of his childhood in Galicia and express the difficulties of migration from the point of view of a Galician, turning the lives of so many people into literature that can be shared by readers from different continents. His first published work is a collection of stories, *A Hatful of Cherries: Short Stories*, issued in 2007 and again in 2011. Since the start he has enjoyed considerable success. These sixteen stories are by an author who hails from elsewhere, and there is some irony in the fact that the name of his village of birth is Alemparte, (Lalín, Province of Pontevedra, Galicia), literally ‘a different place’. Calvino manages to evoke other parts of the world in English. He decided to devote himself to literature in his maturity, leaving a career as an entrepreneur in Australia to explore this transnational adventure from the point of view of writing from a contemporary point of view in the style of magic realism. He published in the continent’s most prestigious magazines, such as *Quadrant* (2011, 2015) and *Review of Australian Fiction* (2015), in which the country’s most significant authors appear. His use of English is exceptional, but the admixture of Galicia —particularly in the themes of “Do not Touch Anything”, “Detour” and “Basil”— and the conscious shift away from Australian literary language and culture lend his writing a strange beauty and produce in it a notable attractiveness. Félix Calvino resolves to use Galician themes and to write for an Anglophone audience, and from that mixture arises his originality. As he indicates in the preface to his book of stories, he physically left Galicia in a sort of exile incited by his

rejection of the rules of Francoism (p. 7). The author further explores the connections between memory and imagination, moving through topics such as childhood, the difficulties of the post-war period in Galicia, but also seemingly minor events occurring on the streets of Australian cities which reveal suspense, a random event, or a profound tragedy. The different places in which the stories take place do not lead to the collection being disjointed, and the work as a whole is archetypal of the Australian experience, historically composed of immigrants from various places around the globe. The stories are full of tenderness, humour and irony in everyday themes, with a simple and clear style, as in the following sentence: "Grandfather had become disillusioned with women when my Grandmother died young and without his consent" (Calvino, 2007: 42).

It is to be noted that this writer, who comes from a marginalized country, depicts both Galician and Aboriginal poor peoples in his Australian texts, making them the centre of a new fictional universe. My contention is that in his literature Calvino claims that poor dispossessed people from other lands find in Australia a new place in which they sometimes feel as homeless and peripheral as the Aborigines may have felt after colonization. Calvino, as a writer, enters this experience of colonial and postcolonial societies in which some of the stories on contemporary life in Australian cities are, albeit indirectly, dealing with issues of modernization, race, class, cultural domination and identity. Thence, the critical reception enjoyed by Calvino comes not only from those readers who avidly follow his work but also in the voice of one of Australia's principal literary authors, David Malouf (1934), a playwright and poet who is especially known for novels such as *Fly Away Peter* (1982) and *Remembering Babylon* (1993). On Félix Calvino's story collection, Malouf said:

It deals with testimonies of other lives in another place, something very alive, exciting, humorous, strange, a gift to the reader, as is also the austere and tender way in which it is written. Calvino is a new voice in this scenario, a fascinating, individual voice, and now that we know that he exists, he has become indispensable for all those who construct our history. (Verbal testimony of Roy Boland)

This claim by Malouf about a collection of stories on Galician themes as an adjunct to the construction of Australian history, and of what immigrants have contributed to this, is related to the ever-fluid identity of the country, built since ancient times by the peoples that first inhabited it and, subsequently, from the peripheries by immigrants of all kinds come from all confines of the world, Galicia included. In this sense the periphery and margins serve as a place of creation and power and become central in the contemporary history of Australian literature (hooks, 1990: p. 152), and ultimately we are dealing with transnational literature as defined by Paul Jay (2010). For his part Australian writer Venero Armanno (1959-) said, in presenting the collection *A Hatful of Cherries*, that there is no romanticism in Calvino's writing, and that it has a very natural style. He also suggested that it is not far from Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, from Italo Svevo, Italo Calvino –who is no relation–, or his favourite, Cesare Pavese. A further aspect that accounts for the positive literary reception of Calvino in Australia is the use made of his texts in the visual arts. For example, one of his stories was adapted as the short film

Unfinished Thoughts, which, following a very favourable reception in Australia, was nominated for eight South Australia Screen Awards, winning the best actress award for Chantal Contouri. Despite the fact that the film has a director of Greek origin, Dimitrios Pouliot, and is set in the culture of that country, the figure of the grandmother who dies in bed can nevertheless be clearly recognized as an old Galician lady who has undergone the experience of emigration.

In January 2014 Félix Calvino published the novella *Alfonso*, and once again David Malouf was present at the Sydney launch of the book. Armanno, who is of Italian origin, said of this new work:

Alfonso is a gentle yet searching exploration of a Spanish migrant's feelings and experiences in the country Australia used to be more than forty years ago. Felix Calvino infuses the stuff of everyday life with tenderness and magic. He recovers a lost time and sensibility. The past shimmers back to life. (n.p.)

It was also noted at the presentation of the book that this experience of emigration, with all its potential advantages for the emigrant, is endured at the cost of material and emotional security. In *Alfonso* the author tries to describe the difficulties of men who migrate alone, since in exchange for attaining material prosperity they lose their history, and their own language and culture, sinking into a kind of spiritual poverty. They are equated to displaced Aborigines, who feel that they are neither here nor there, with a permanent sense of longing (Popa 2016: 231), with "two selves" (Harp 2016: n.p) and with "the specifically Galician ache for home" (Halford 2016: p. 3).

In an interview, Calvino speaks about his five fundamental literary influences: Cervantes, Flauvert, Chekhov, Hemingway and García Márquez (Horner, 2009: n.p.). The influence of the Colombian Nobel laureate seems to be key in his praxis, given that in Calvino's stories we are on occasion taken into a magical atmosphere, a time which does not exist, yet which native Galicians recognise as real and close to their own memories. In "They Are Only Dreams", one of the stories from his first collection *A Hatful of Cherries*, Calvino depicts a family of three, whose daughter has the power of predicting death. The parents continue to ignore it so as to avoid being accused by the neighbours for witchcraft, and convincing themselves that "they are only dreams". Similarly, one of his most recent stories, "The Road" also reflects the García-Marquezian atmosphere of mixing the sublime and the earthly, transforming the awesome into the common. This story is part of a new book, *So Much Smoke*, published in late 2016 and advertised alongside with books by highly-reputed authors such as Zadie Smith's *Swing Time* (Anon. avidreader.au.com, Dec 2016 n.p). The ancient beliefs and the way of life depicted in the text seem to be the *leit motiv* of the characters' existence in a far-off land in Southern Europe which is completely unknown for the intended Australian readership. The very first word of the story is actually a Hispanic name, Francisco, and later in the story the reader comes across with the name of the city of Lugo, founded in Galicia by the Romans in the third century AD, but absolutely unfamiliar to Anglophone audiences.

The road stands for both the hard path to the city, in terms of physical and economic effort, and for the old Roman road hidden under the arid land. Calvino touches on surrealism, as men and women in rural Galicia are shown in isolation within their own village, engaged in a subsistence agricultural economy. In terms of travel, their horizons are the nearby village, and they hardly ever visit the city, even in times of extreme necessity. While the mother of the family was alive, their life had been stable, but later the family disintegrates, for the father dies intestate and one of the children refuses to continue to remain together in the same house. Death, poverty and the potential envy between brothers in a rural community are in fact among the key issues in the story from the very beginning. It actually opens with the father's intention to make a will and with the anxiety of the preparations: "the nearest authority was more than two hours' walking distance, and there would be expenses, and money was scarce" (p. 61). Francisco's feelings are, on the one hand, that death could come any day, healthy as he may be, and, on the other, that he has to make his will so that there would be no disagreement between his sons. Yet making a will would involve expense, so the narrator reveals the thoughts of the father-character in considering a cheaper possibility which, nonetheless, would also have religious implications. In rural Galicia, social control by the foreign, Castilian-speaking Catholic Church was still common in the early twentieth century, and the father rebels against the normal expectations by not approaching the parish priest in order to make a will, since that would mean both working for free for the church at harvest time and a compulsory confession with Father Herrera. It seems that Francisco is against the type of lavish, feudal church represented by a priest with a Castilian name, before whom he would feel not only poor but condescended to, or even despised:

Of course there was the priest, legally binding, free of charge, and not far away. Unsettling, though. Francisco could not see himself arriving at the priest's house, taking the soft hand put out to shake his. Sitting in the spacious office with its inlaid furniture, his hat in his lap, conscious of his wooden-soled shoes on the waxed floorboards (p. 61).

Not for nothing the character's name, Francisco, is related to an austere type of Catholicism concerned with the poor, represented originally by Saint Francis in the Middle Ages, and which, incidentally, coincides with the name of the present Pope. Other characters' names in this story also have a Biblical significance. When Francisco finally dies intestate, his sons initially take to working in the fields and sharing the "carving of a tombstone for their father's grave" (p. 61). However, later on Francisco's youngest son, José, is expelled from his home by his elder brother, who claims the house for himself as "the elder's privilege" (p. 62). Hence José has to live in a barn with animals and becomes the poorest man in the village, as the property assigned to him is close to the sea and is described as "harsh, arid land, inhabited by crying seagulls and brown lizards" (p. 62). Like the biblical Joseph, he never complains and works hard, "never lost his spontaneous laugh" and helps everyone (p. 63), including his own brother. Surprisingly, an ancient stone road appears on José's land after a storm. This road is thought to be "a sea gate in the early stages of the building of the Roman fort of Lugo in the 3rd century" (p. 63), and as a result of its discovery José "became a wealthy man" (p. 63). Calvino's José

is as generous with his brother as Joseph is in *Genesis* (35: 22) when, after being thrown into a well by his siblings, he offers to share his wealth:

The first thing José did after receiving his settlement was to call on his brother and offer him half a share of his money, even the lot. All he wanted was for them to live together as in the past. His offer was brusquely rejected. Well-meaning neighbours' attempts at reuniting them met with the same fate (p. 63).

As seen in this essay, Félix Calvino's stories are only the most recent in a long list of transnational narratives which attest to a long history of relations between Galicia and Australia. They were first established by travellers of the 16th century, whose epic voyages are imprinted in the collective cultural imagination of both the place of origin and destination, as evinced in epic poems such as *Captain Quiros* by James McAuley and its musical reinterpretations. Similarly, we have seen that Galician themes are also present in the works of other contemporary Australian writers such as Murray Bail and Sally Morgan, in whose novels *Eucalyptus* and *My Place* we found references to Galician towns and historical events that reveal the transcultural dialogue between both countries. As a new literary voice from Galicia, Félix Calvino is now inscribing the rural culture of post-Civil War Galicia in the multi-ethnic collective imagination of present-day Australia. If we accept that the formation of a country involves the compilation and organic hybridization of images and associated notions which, in the case of Australia, would include, among others, narratives of explorers, maps, migrant literary voices, and related artistic events, we could conclude by saying that Galicia has also played a constitutive part in the literary and cultural construction of contemporary Australia.

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